

WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. A composition comprising carboxymethylcellulose (CMC) having a relative urea/water ratio of less than 0.9
2. The composition of claim 1, wherein the CMC has a relative urea/water ratio of less than 0.8
3. The composition of claim 1, wherein the CMC has associative and thixotropic properties.
4. A process for making a CMC comprising,
 - a) reacting in a slurry process, a source of cellulose, and about 40 to 80 wt % of the stoichiometric amount of NaOH for a sufficient time and at a sufficient temperature to form an alkali cellulose, and
 - b) adding to the alkali cellulose an amount of NaOH to bring the total amount of NaOH to about the stoichiometric level, and
 - c) immediately after step b, adding monochloroacetic acid to step b in a sufficient amount and reacting the slurry at a temperature and time sufficient to effect etherification in order to form the CMC product.
5. The process of claim 4, wherein the sufficient time and temperature to effect etherification is about 70°C for about 1 to 2 hours.
6. The process of claim 4, wherein the CMC product is then cooled, any excess base is neutralized, washed, dried, and ground.
7. A CMC product prepared by the process of claim 4.
8. The CMC product of claim 7, wherein the product has a Degree of Substitution of from about 0.6 to about 1.2.
9. An aqueous rheology modifier system comprising the composition of claims 1 or 7.

10. A composition comprising the aqueous rheology modifier system of claim 9 as a vehicle component wherein the composition is selected from the group consisting of personal care, household care, paint, building material and construction, pharmaceutical, medical care, oilfield, mineral processing, paper making and paper coating, and food.

11. The composition of claim 10, wherein the composition is a personal care composition comprising (a) from about 0.1 % to about 99.0 % by weight of the vehicle component and (b) at least one active personal care ingredient.

12. The composition of claim 11, wherein the at least one active personal care ingredient is selected from the group consisting of deodorant, skin coolants, emollients, antiperspirant actives, moisturizing agents, cleansing agents, sunscreen actives, hair treatment agents, oral care agents, tissue paper products, and beauty aids.

13. The composition of claim 10, wherein the composition is a household care composition comprising (a) from about 0.1 % to about 99.0 % by weight of the vehicle component and (b) at least one active household care ingredient.

14. The composition of claim 13, wherein the at least one active household care ingredient is selected from the group consisting of industrial grade bar, gel and liquid soap actives, all purpose cleaning agents, disinfecting ingredient, rug and upholstery cleaning actives, laundry softeners actives, laundry detergent ingredients, dishwashing detergents, toilet bowl cleaning agents and fabric sizing agents.

15. The composition of claim 10, wherein the composition is a paint composition comprising a latex.

16. The composition of claim 15, wherein the paint composition also comprises a pigment.

17. The composition of claim 10, wherein the composition is a building material composition selected from the group consisting of joint compounds, mortars, concrete, caulking, and cement.
- 5 18. The composition of claim 10 wherein the composition is a pharmaceutical composition comprising an active drug.
19. The composition of claim 18, wherein the pharmaceutical composition is a sustained release system.
- 10 20. The composition of claim 10, wherein the composition is an oilfield composition selected from the group consisting drilling fluids and completion fluids.
- 15 21. The composition of claim 10, wherein the composition is a food composition selected from the group consisting of tortillas, cake mixes, bread mixes, bread, ice cream, sour cream, processed cheese spreads, cheese foods, and beverages.
- 20 22. The composition of claim 10, wherein the personal care composition is an oral care composition.
23. The composition of claim 22, wherein the oral care composition is a toothpaste or a denture adhesive.
- 25 24. A pharmaceutical composition in solid dosage form comprising the composition of claim 1 and a dry pharmaceutical active ingredient.
25. The composition of claim 24, wherein the composition of claim 1 functions as a binder or coating.
- 30 26. A blended composition comprising the composition of claim 1 and another water soluble or water swellable polymer.

27. An oral care composition comprising the composition of claim 26.

28. The blended composition of claim 26, wherein the polymer is selected from the group consisting of polysaccharides, biopolymers, synthetic polymers,
5 and thickening silicas.

29. The blended composition of claim 28, wherein the polysaccharide is a nonionic, anionic, or cationic polymer selected from the group consisting of hydroxyethylcellulose (HEC), hydrophobically modified hydroxyethylcellulose
10 (HMHEC), ethyl hydroxyethyl cellulose (EHEC), hydroxypropyl methyl cellulose (HPMC), hydroxyethyl methyl cellulose (HEMC), methylcellulose (MC) carrageenan, guar, hyaluronic acid, and glucosaminoglycan.

30. The blended composition of claim 28, wherein the biopolymer is
15 xanthan gum.

31. The blended composition of claim 28, wherein the synthetic polymers are a nonionic, anionic, or cationic polymer selected from the group consisting of poly ethylene glycol, PEO-PPO, polyvinyl alcohol, polyacrylic acid,
20 polyacrylates and co-polymers thereof, carbomer, and synthetic quats.